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6 February 1953

F-236803

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SUBJECT: Visits to Coal, Manganese, and Phosphate Mining Operations

SOURCE :

1. During our tour of the mining areas of Morocco in September 1952, it was unfortunate that we spent only one day in the area of the Djerada coal basin. We did, however, walk across a portion of the crop of the coal series. I saw very little of the mining operations as we were not taken underground. The surface plant seemed to be in good condition and the aerial tramway was busily transporting coal. However, as in other areas of cheap labor, I saw things being done that seemed like a great waste of effort. Some gondola freight cars, for instance, were being loaded with gravel from a distance of perhaps 30 feet. The gravel from the main pile was shoveled toward the car where another group would reshovel it and eventually the last group would throw the gravel into the car. There appeared to be 50 or more persons involved around each car.
2. I collected very little information on manganese mining. The route of our excursion crossed the High Atlas Mountains between Marrakech and Ouarzazate. We met several convoys of manganese trucks on our way across the mountains. In the area of the manganese mines, we again did not get underground and we actually were not very near the surface installations and aerial tramways. In general, the leaders did not seem overly eager to take the party underground.
3. In the phosphate district, however, due to my faulty understanding of French, I demanded and got the party underground. The deposit is a bedded deposit like coal and is mined in a similar manner; that is, the room and pillar method, followed by caving as they rob the pillars. The main haulage ways have conveyor belts and these converge on a central belt which takes the phosphate to the loading plant above ground. Phosphate mining here seemed to be an efficient operation, except that the pillar robbing is rather dangerous and casualties are rather frequent. The surface installation was modern, but rather simple as the phosphate needed no treatment. The conveyor belt loaded into bins and from the bins the ore was transferred to an aerial tramway which trans the ore to the nearest railroad. I asked to see the plant at Mangan where the phosphate is converted into superphosphate, but this request could not be granted as the mining operation is done by one organization and the processing operation by another.

TYPE ACT-DISE-INT-DATE AREA

MAR 31 1953